

"FOR CHRIST AND THE CHURCH."

THE LOOKOUT COMMITTEE
AND ITS WORK.

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BY *second*
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PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED SOCIETY OF CHRISTIAN ENDEAVOR.

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A FAMILIAR LETTER

From the President of the United Society.

TO THE LOOKOUT COMMITTEE.

MY DEAR FRIENDS: It is about time, I think, that some of the accumulated good things which I have been treasuring up for a long time should be handed over to you.

I am often asked which is the most important committee connected with our society. Comparisons are said to be odious, and where each committee is of vital importance in its own sphere, there is no need of instituting comparisons, but I think if I must give up any committee, the last one I would want to part with would be the Lookout Committee. It is more unique and peculiar to the Christian Endeavor Society than any other. It affords an unrivalled opportunity to do good, and that is the standard of value in all the committees.

There is a chance, if you are on this committee, to exercise all your zeal and wisdom and piety and sanctified sense. Faithful and efficient as are many of our Lookout Committees, we have not begun to exhaust the possibilities which they contain for helping the society and aiding the pastor and blessing the church. Let me divide what I have to say under four short heads,—what you can do for the church, for the society

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as a whole, for the active members, for the associate members. A minister always feels more comfortable, you know, when he gets his sermon well divided up into firstly, secondly, thirdly, fourthly. First,—

FOR THE CHURCH.

I will leave this part of your work for you to settle with your own pastor. He is the best adviser. But be sure and lay the matter before him, and ask him what he wishes you to do for the church. The very asking of this question and offering of this service, in themselves, are acts of no small consequence. At the beginning of my pastorate, I remember that two or three young ladies came to me at the close of one of the first prayer-meetings (it was before a Christian Endeavor Society had been established), and said, "What can we do to help you, Mr. Clark? Please let us know, and remember that we are always ready to do what we can for the church and its pastor." That simple assurance gave me new courage for months to come. I may safely leave this division of this little sermon for you and your pastor to subdivide and illustrate, and to add the improvements. If I know anything about your pastor, he will give you plenty to do if you cordially offer your services.

FOR THE SOCIETY.

To the society, as a whole, the Lookout Committee holds a very important relation. What the "standing-committee" is to the church, what the Governor's Council is to the State, what the President's Cabinet is to the nation, such, to some extent, is the Lookout Committee to the society. This committee is the door through

which the new members enter in. What the society shall be, whether careless and inefficient, or faithful, earnest and zealous, will depend largely upon this committee. If the door is opened too wide, so that all who wish come in to the active membership, whether they are earnest Christians or not, the society degenerates swiftly and surely. If in your term of office you admit some unfaithful members, you will do the society an injury which half a score of future committees may not be able to remedy. Of course you cannot ensure complete faithfulness and the highest style of Christian character on the part of every one who joins the society, but it is your duty to make sure that every applicant *knows what he is doing, that he has seen the Constitution, that he understands the pledge, and that you have his promise, with the help of God, to live up to it.*

TO THE ACTIVE MEMBERS.

Here your work intermingles with the labors of some other committees, like the Prayer-meeting, the Calling Committee, etc., and yet it is quite distinct. You should know who among the active members are habitually absent from the meetings; you should find out who, if any, are negligent to their vows; you should take the names of those who do not respond to the roll at the consecration-meeting, and look them up at once. Do not wait until they have forfeited their membership before calling on them, but after the *first* unexcused absence from a consecration-meeting, call on them, and you may be able to save them to the society. Your committee should sit in different parts of the room if the meeting is a large one, so as to have some oversight

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of all, in a quiet way. A record book, which you carry in your pocket, and which will show at a glance who are present and who have taken part in each meeting, is a valuable help and easily kept, after you once get accustomed to it. "But," you say, "I do not like to act the part of spy." No one asks you to do this. You are simply asked to do the very duties for which you were chosen when you were elected upon the Lookout Committee. No one can complain of you for doing your duty. If any active members are wilfully unfaithful and obdurate, then let the society drop them after three consecutive unexcused absences from the consecration-meeting. You do not drop them, they drop themselves by their own unfaithfulness. The rule is not a hard one. It is a mistaken kindness to the active member to keep him after he has violated the pledge; it is disastrous to the society to do th's.

TO THE ASSOCIATE MEMBERS.

Your relations to the associate members may be exceedingly helpful, if you will but make them so. Remember, that every one of them, and, for that matter, every young person in the church and Sunday school, is a candidate for active membership in the society and in the church, and do not be satisfied until you have done all you can to bring this about. Do not be in too much of a hurry to bring them into the society as active members, until they give some good evidence of being active Christians, but on the other hand, do not delay a single week in bringing them in after they are willing to say that they will live for Christ and do their duty as active members. To sum it all up in a word,

your duty is to do all that you can to keep the society active, earnest, efficient, spiritually-minded. No slight task, is it? But you can do it "through Him who strengtheneth you."

ANOTHER WAY OF HELPING THE SOCIETY.

Bringing just as many of your members as possible under the stimulating influence of Christian Endeavor conventions, conferences, union meetings, etc. These meetings will often do you more good than you imagine, by awakening an interest in the whole society, and by stimulating all to renewed earnestness. A single delegate has often brought back enough inspiration from one of our great conventions to kindle the enthusiasm of a whole society.

Your committee is such an interesting one, and the subjects it opens are so prolific, that the only trouble is to know where to stop; but I will let others give you their idea of what the Lookout Committee should be and do. I will only add that observation and correspondence lead me to believe that the great majority of our Lookout Committees are exceedingly earnest and faithful, and to them is due no small share of the success of our societies. That this may be true of every one is the wish and prayer of your friend,

FRANCIS E. CLARK.

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GLEANINGS FROM THE LOOKOUT FIELD.

BY M. ARONETTA WILBUR.

Any one who reads carefully the signs of the times, as displayed over shop doors, and emphasized in conversation, will be impressed with the practical tendency of our age. We have "practical plumbers," "practical carpenters and builders;" our business colleges advertise the benefits of a "practical education;" and the theme of pulpit discourse is no longer doctrine, but "practical religion." Of all things yet attempted, I know of nothing more practical in its sphere for good, than the Christian Endeavor Society. To every side of man's varied nature does it appeal, urging the conviction that it is not merely a lip-consecration which is required to serve God, but one so deep and abiding that our words, our intellect, our social pleasures, our business capacity, our home duties, our missionary interest, and our tact, shall all be embraced in this Christian consecration. This is the end we have in view, this the feeling which we desire to stimulate and cultivate in every heart. *How* best to do this is the all-important question.

The functions of the Lookout Committee have been so often discussed that it seems almost superfluous to attempt to define or enlarge upon them. Were I to rename it, the

GYMNASTIC COMMITTEE

would most nearly meet my views of its work; for its members must be here, there and everywhere; now mounting on the wings of prayer with the Devotional Committee, now exchanging cordial greetings with the Social Committee, then wafted by harmonious breezes into the companionship of the Music Committee, lending a helping hand to that committee whose field is the world, and anon in the ranks of the recruiting sergeants of the Sunday School Committee.

HOW TO DO THE WORK.

From the preceding brief review of the work it will be seen that our first duty is to look after the other committees, by constantly bringing to their attention suggestions and ideas which may have escaped them; and here the utmost tact must be used, lest we be termed "officious," where we mean to be only helpful.

The subject we subdivided into: (1) How to *secure* members. (2) How to *care* for these members.

1. All people like attention; and a cordial handshake at the door, a pleasant greeting on the street, to the one who is out of the fold, may be as potent as the prayer-meeting in filling our ranks.

The next point to be observed is to make the meetings attractive. To accomplish this we must have a constantly varying order of exercises; must see that the room is cheery and comfortable; and above all, that it is well-ventilated; it is almost impossible to give fixed attention when the air is hot and impure. Devotion declines as the mercury rises. In an attractive meeting, music plays an important part, and we should assist by

every means in our power to make the service of song interesting, beneficial and complete; for souls have been sung into the kingdom when they could have been reached in no other way.

An effective way to secure members from the Sunday school, is to send personal notes of invitation, or distribute topic cards with an earnest request to attend the meetings. And the one who has made the request must surely remember to greet the new-comer at the meeting. Lastly, we must show in ourselves the benefits of membership in our society; and this is really the principal agent in securing members. When we can show how blest is "the tie that binds our hearts in Christian love," and prove by our daily growth in grace and conversation, that "the fellowship of kindred minds is like to that above," we may rest assured that others will want to join us.

2. The second class of duties that await us are the answers to the question, "How can we care for our members?" Our constitution declares that the object of the society is to "promote an earnest Christian life among its members, to increase their mutual acquaintance, and make them more useful in the service of God." The means and methods which best secure this result are the ones we must employ. In speaking further of methods, it is necessary for me to admit that these suggestions are not all the result of successful experiment, but too often, alas! the aftermath of discouraging failures.

The personnel of the committee is the first consideration, and the prime requisites for a member of it are consecration to the work of the Master, and an obliging

readiness to do anything asked, regardless of personal inconvenience. Those committee meetings prove the most profitable which are preceded by a short devotional service.

As a general thing no new application should be acted upon, until some member of the committee has become personally acquainted with the applicant. In a rapidly growing society this proves a very necessary measure.

In case a member leaves the city to reside elsewhere, a letter of dismission from the home society to one in his new home is always granted. But if there is no society in the new home, the name of the absent member is kept on the books until he requests a letter, or the dropping of his name. Members absent from the consecration meeting, whether active or associate, are warned by a kindly circular, and invited to attend the next meeting, while across the top of the circular sent to those absent from three consecutive meetings is written the ominous "Third call and warning before dropping the name from the roll." Without any qualification of the statement, this is the saddest duty our committee has to perform. When a name has been dropped from membership, the greatest care and tact, or "sanctified common-sense," must be used, else the member dropped from the roll will in turn cease to attend any of the meetings, and break off this last restraining influence. By the gentleness of Christ manifested in our lives, we must try to win him back to the fold.

But let no one imagine that this work is all easy, and moves along in well-oiled grooves.

DISCOURAGEMENTS.

Apathetic Christians, members who are not workers, and who have to be urged to take part, a lagging interest

in the prayer-meeting and a laxity in pledge-keeping, women afraid to take part, poor singing, no spontaneity in prayer, irrelevant conversation at its close, all these are discouraging elements, and were they all found in one society, we might predict the speedy death of that society. But they are not, and although in our midst may be many of these discouraging features; "with God all things are possible," and we may and can overcome them.

Let us not be discouraged if our society seems not so prosperous as another, or if we cannot follow successfully the rule which some other society has tried with large results. The same task is assigned to each society, to bring salvation to human souls; we have the same motive, love for Christ; the same working materials, consecrated hearts and hands; yet into this work our individuality will creep; our work and methods must bear our own stamp. Suggestions, seed-thoughts of methods, we may receive from others, but they must be planted in our own brain-soil, fertilized by our prayers and character before they can bring forth the distinctive fruit required by the necessities of our work.

Yet, in spite of difficulties and discouragements, the work has its encouraging features. As month by month we watch the growth in grace of our members, the greater readiness in prayer, and increasing familiarity with the Bible, we rejoice greatly. And when these are joined with increased interest in church work and philanthropic efforts of all kinds, indications of spiritual broadening and wakefulness, we realize that we young people are aiding in the religious education of each other, and helping to bring about the time when

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"they that love the Lord shall speak often one to another," and our hearts are filled with gratitude to our Heavenly Father that He has permitted us to have some share, however small, in the work of enlarging and strengthening His kingdom on earth.

WHY DO THE WORK.

We have endeavored thus far to show *how* this work was to be done, and now we are confronted by the inevitable "*Why?*" Why does a Lookout Committee exist? In brief, we might answer that no human machinery has yet been invented that did not need constant watchfulness to keep it in running order, and no organization is so perfect that if left to general direction it will not become rusty and fall to pieces. In this matter of watching the workings of the society, its needs, growth, opportunities and possibilities, the Lookout Committee but assists the president. Some one on the "lookout" is a necessity in every ship, and not less in the ship of the church and the society than in the *Great Eastern*. A second reason is found in the primary and fundamental work of the society, the chief object of our labors, the salvation of immortal human souls. This is the effort which commands our highest energies. Says Victor Hugo, "Our duty is to cultivate the human soul, to rid God's orchard of caterpillars." To destroy the cankerworms of worldliness, frivolity, and divided interest, which are eating the hearts of many professing Christians, leaving only a harvest of withered leaves where much fruit was expected, surely this is our plain and inevitable duty. And if the worm is in our own hearts, let us first of all crush it there.

There is another reason why we should try to save souls, because only thus can we prove that our faith is real and vital. If Christ has been precious to us, we should be only too glad to tell others the "old, old story of Jesus and His love."

I have already alluded to the fact that the main necessity in our work is consecration. Unless we are thoroughly imbued with the spirit of humble devotedness to Christ, doing all with an eye single to His service, we shall be in great danger of becoming religiously vain about our society and our usefulness, and the splendid work our committee is accomplishing. Especially is this the danger in a large and growing society, where we are apt to strive for pre-eminence in State reports rather than for the good of souls. Only Christ in our hearts can keep us from religious vanity. Eternal vigilance or vigilance for things eternal is what we need. We might well follow the example of Petra, the Fisher Maiden of Björnstjerne Björnson's creation, who, gazing into the starry sky, "knew that hers were as many moments as shone twinkling lights yonder, and she prayed God that He would assist her to make each one radiant in uses, that so His love might have created no light in vain." "Radiant in uses!" Surely a life whose comprehensive moments can thus be described will sparkle with eternal brilliance in that day when the Lord makes up His jewels.

QUESTION-BOX.

1. Why has not *our* society succeeded in accomplishing the good results which we read about from all other quarters?

Ans. Not knowing your peculiar circumstances or history, we cannot certainly tell, but judging from the experience of others, it is very likely because your society has not adopted the highest standard. It has left the prayer-meeting pledge out of the constitution, perhaps, or ignored it, if it has not left it out. Cases of complete or partial failure are almost always due to this lack. The remedy is reorganization on the stricter basis, and a conscientious fulfilment of obligations. This has proved effective in hundreds of cases.

2. Should the rules of the constitution be strictly observed?

Ans. Yes. They should be interpreted according to Christian common-sense, and adhered to conscientiously and faithfully.

3. How often should the Lookout Committee visit delinquent members?

Ans. After every absence from a consecration-meeting. Sometimes a kindly note will accomplish as much as or more than a visit.

4. (a) Should the lookout committee interview all absentees from *regular* meetings or simply from the *consecration-meetings*? (b) In a reorganized society, will it be wiser for the lookout committee to interview all who are silent at the regular meetings, or simply at the consecration-meetings?

Ans. These two questions are essentially one. Wisdom and common-sense as well as faithfulness should be exercised, of course, in regard to all such matters, and the interview of the lookout committee should take place whenever it will do the most good. The consecration and roll-call meeting gives the best opportunity to show

who is absent without excuse, but if an active member is *habitually* absent from or silent in the regular meetings he should be reminded of his duty. While the lookout committee should avoid anything that looks like officiousness, its great danger is that it will not be sufficiently prompt and faithful. Anything that begins to look like *habitual* or wilful absence or silence should be looked after. The committee is elected by the society for this purpose, and surely cannot be blamed for simply doing its duty.

THE PASTOR'S CABINET.

The Lookout Committee of the Society of Christian Endeavor has often been called "The pastor's cabinet"—not a bad name, by any means. This committee may be of immense assistance to every earnest pastor in his work. Many cases of spiritual decline can be reached by its members which he cannot touch. Much information concerning the advancement of the young people in the pilgrim path naturally comes to this committee, which otherwise the pastor would find it very difficult to gain.

Let the wise pastor make the most of this agency for helping and becoming acquainted with his young people, which the Society of Christian Endeavor puts into his hands.

No pastor can do better than to call *all* the committees of his Young People's Society together two or three times a year, for consultation, and for the inspiration which he alone can give them. Let him consult with his cabinet, however, oftener than this. "How is Johnny A. getting on?" "I have not heard Susie B.'s

voice in prayer-meeting lately: what is the reason?" "I think that Charlie C. shows some signs of interest; couldn't you help me to bring him nearer to the Kingdom?" These are some of the questions and suggestions that will be heard at this cabinet meeting. There is no prying espionage involved in this, but simply a kindly and pastoral solicitude, using the readiest and most efficient method for helping the individual young person in the critical days of early discipleship. Brethren, let us make the most of these "pastor's cabinets." Lookout committees, see that the members of your pastor's cabinet are alert, intelligent and faithful.

SUGGESTIONS.

1. Hold frequent meetings,—certainly not less than once a month, when the monthly report is to be made up, and just before it is presented. Let the entire situation be canvassed at these meetings, and ways and means devised for its betterment.
2. Be all the time on the lookout for new members. Explain to young people what the society is and does. Get from the church books a complete list of the young people of the congregation and Sunday school for material upon which to work, and add to it from the outside. Use this list at every committee meeting.
3. Be careful that everybody who comes into the society fully understands what he undertakes and promises, especially regarding the prayer-meeting pledge. Keep all supplied with Constitutions, and use them.
4. Kindly look at the work of the other committees if occasion demands and assist them in it. Let it be understood that the Lookout Committee is not meddling when it attends to whatever concerns the welfare of the society, but only minding its own proper constitutional business.

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